

Disclaimer: *The following news briefs were prepared for the Sandhills Task Force Board members prior to Board meetings to provide them with an update of projects or actions. It contains the comments of the Secretary and do not necessarily reflect or imply the opinion or position of the Board.*

Sandhills Task Force

"Where People and Land are One"

P.O. Box 1686

Kearney, Nebraska 68848

June, 2001

Next Task Force Meeting: June 27th

Our next meeting will be held at Stub's Restaurant in Thedford. The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. Central Time.

Updates:

Jim, Byron, Rob and A.B. met with Cherry County Commissionersto obtain their approval of the Sandhills Task Force placing a conservation easement on the fen property in conjunction with selling the land back to a private ranching operation(s). The Commissioners approved the action once they understood what a fen was.

Cherry County agreed to try weir tubes on select road projects.At the same Commission meeting, Jim proposed to the Commissioners the idea of the STF providing weir-style culverts on road projects where stream restoration would benefit. The tube will allow water to pool to about three-foot depth before it flows down stream. The benefits include: it checks down-cutting of streams, it helps check the sudden downstream rush of water after a snow melt or heavy rain, and it allows for creation of wildlife habitat. In most cases, the three-foot pool would just fill the stream channel. In other situations, it would create a small seasonal pool for wildlife. The details of the arrangement need to be worked out but would probably include the STF paying for the tube and the county installing it. Each installation would have to be approved by a representative of the STF. Cost of each tube is estimated to be about \$4500.

Letter sent to Bud Stolzenburg. Bud was notified that the STF would provide up to \$3000 for tuition for participants that completed the Practicum. Jim is enrolled in the course.

Barb's name added to signatory list on checking account.All the necessary paperwork was completed for Barb to have signatory authority. Both Barb and Byron were sent a pack of 25 checks.

Valentine NRCS notified of STF funding GIS equipment.Jan Joseph was notified of our decision to fund GIS equipment. Jan was told to purchase the equipment and have the bill sent to me for payment.

Non-renewable CD was cashed and a new CD was purchased at Purdum State Bank. The original CD for \$100,000 reached maturity and could not be automatically renewed. From past experiencePurdum has had the most competitive rate. The new rate was 5 percent for 6 months. The rate for a year was only about 0.2 percent more. The banker and I both felt the rates were more likely to go up in 6 months than to be significantly lower. So, another 6 month CD was purchased.

Action needed by the Board: Voice opinion of my actions taken on behalf of STF.

FWS advanced STF \$21,715 for conservation work. As part of a 5-year cooperative agreement with the STF, the FWS deposited the balance of the agreement amount into our checking account. Previously, the FWS reimbursed us for costs as projects were done. This is the first time they have paid us on good faith that we will accomplish what we set out to do.

Insurance on STF property. I contacted an independent insurance agent about getting insurance coverage on property having STF ownership. They are checking several sources for the best quote. The grant

agreement with NET states that property valued over \$500, purchased with trust funds, be insured. That includes the office equipment Jim has and maybe the total station located at Thedford.

Action needed by the Board: Approve the purchase of property insurance

NET agreed to reimburse STF for Thedford fire grassland study. I contacted NET to see if they would honor our request for reimbursement for funding a fire-effect study conducted by NRCS. Our cooperative agreement with NRCS is for \$25,000. To date, we have paid \$15,310. An invoice for the balance was submitted by NRCS to the STF last September. I have not paid the balance because STF has not received a final product.

4-H Camp Requests Funds to Pay for Top Campers Awards.

The Society of Range Management is asking for our financial support by contributing \$650 for the purchase of Top Camper awards. The awards are given to the top 10 campers at the Nebraska Range Youth Camp for Range Management. Each recipient will receive plant identification or range resources books. The camp will be held June 25-29.

Action needed by the Board: Approve the funding of \$650 to the SRM.

NRCS-Ogallala Requests Funds for GIS Equipment.

Very similar to the request we addressed at our April meeting, Ogallala NRCS is asking for \$10,907 to purchase a computer (\$3,135) and 42" printer (\$7,772). They are requesting an additional \$1295 from the Grazing Lands Coalition for a GPS unit and GIS software. The office provides assistance in Keith and Arthur Counties.

Action needed by the Board: Approve the funding of \$10,907 to NRCS.

UNL Receives \$10,000 for Bird Survey.

In conjunction with the STF wishes to do a bird survey associated with three types of grazing systems, Ron Johnson from UNL submitted a grant application to the Sampson Range and Pasture Management Endowment. He received the grant and it will be used in conjunction with \$15,000 from the STF for the first year of the bird study. The Task Force remains in the driver's seat in developing the study to meet our objectives or goals.

STF Files Their 990 Form With IRS.

I spent an intense couple of days reading the IRS manual that comes with the annual 990 Form. To the best of my knowledge and ability, I believe I did it correctly. I contacted John Detisch, who helped us get the tax status, about a couple of questions. This last year's filing was relatively simple, but next year will be a whole lot tougher, with things like the conservation easement, purchase of equipment, etc. I strongly recommend we get it done professionally next year.

NGPC Wishes to Develop a Cooperative Agreement With STF. NGPC would like to support the STF and its projects by providing \$20,000 (up front) to the Task Force. The key conditions of the agreement are to match STF funding to do planned grazing systems, wetland and stream projects. The money cannot be used for administration, salary, or equipment. They also require their signature on projects prior to using their funds.

In the world of fund raising, their \$20,000 can easily mean an additional \$6,000-\$10,000 of matching funds from a granting organization.

Action needed by the Board: Approve the terms of the cooperative agreement.

Work Begun on Website.

I have been working on a Web site for the Task Force. What I would really like is a logo that could go with the site. To date, this is the best I have in mind.



STF Creates a Recognition Sign for Cow Creek Project.

In recognition of the contribution of numerous partners in completing the project. Gary Schaeffer has agreed to post the sign at his driveway.

FWS Hiring New Employee.

Marcelle Francke decided to go back to college to get a Master's Degree in planning. I would like the STF to consider funding the advertising cost of announcing the job in local newspapers. It is prohibitive for FWS to pay for newspaper ads. This would increase the chance of finding a Sandhill person for the position.

Action needed by the Board: Approve funding costs to place ads in area newspapers.